THE SANDMAN ✦ UNIVERSE

Lucifer

"Rawly rendered and wryly written."
—Newsarama

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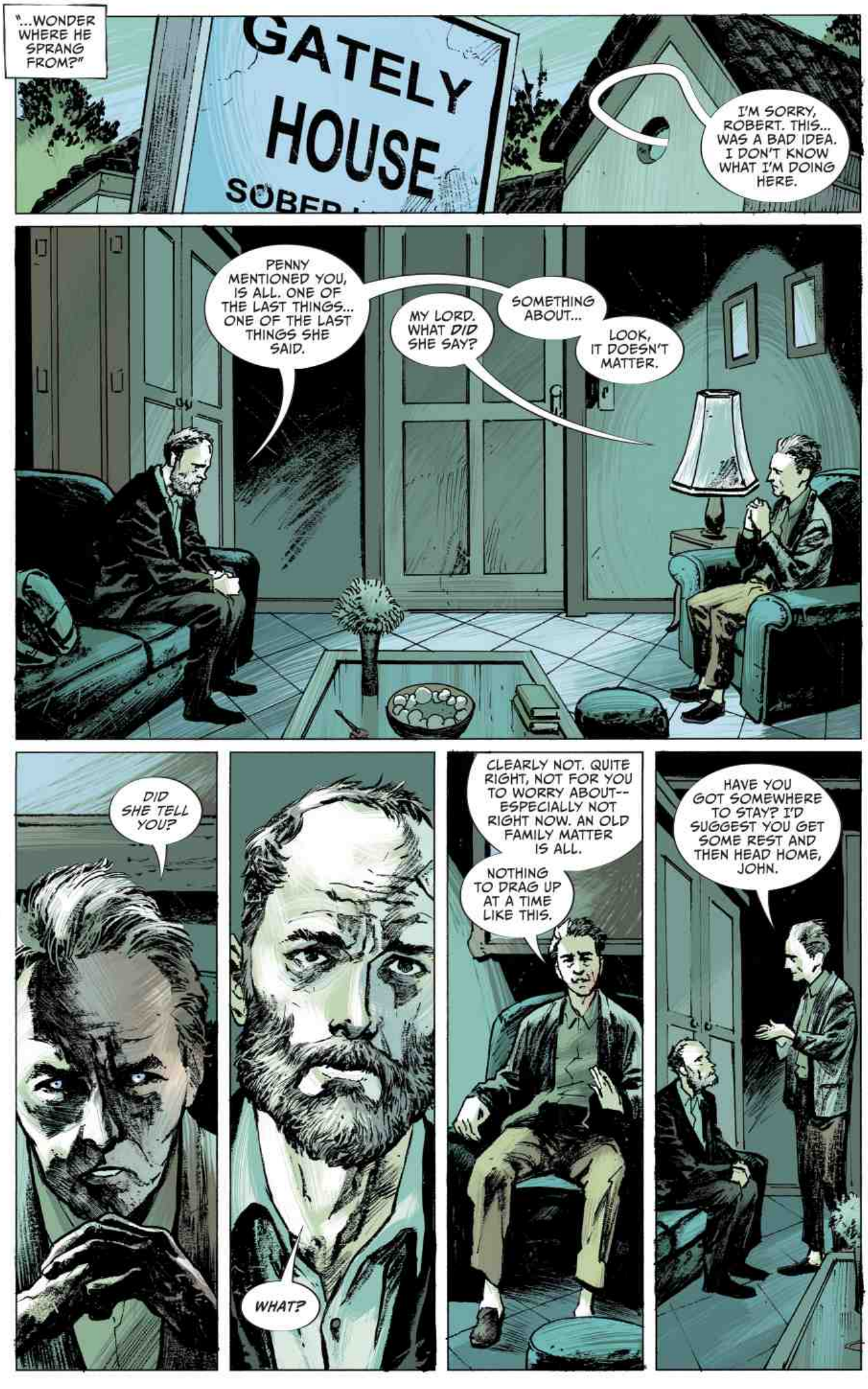
DC VERTIGO

MATURE READERS

Dan *Watters*
Sebastian *Fiumara*
Max *Fiumara*
Dave *McCaig*

WELL, LUCIFER.
IT'S A VERY *NICE* STATUE...
IT IS *NOT* A NICE STATUE.
IT IS A SYMBOL OF OUR *IMPRISONMENT*--A TRACE OF HE WHO PUT US HERE. HE WHO I WILL FIND, AND THEN *DESTROY*.
STEP FORWARD NOW, ANY OF YOU WHO *KNOW* HIM.
I LIKE THE ***POINTY CLAWS.*** I BET HE COULD DO YOU SOME DAMAGE WITH THEM.
WE ARE NOT TALKING ABOUT THE POINTY CLAWS, JACK. WE ARE TALKING ABOUT LIBERATION FROM THE TYRANNY OF THIS GEOGRAPHY.
DO YOU RECOGNIZE HIM? *THINK.*
JUST SPLIT YE RIGHT UP. GUTS TO GIZZARD.
NASTY LOOKIN' PIECE'A WORK...

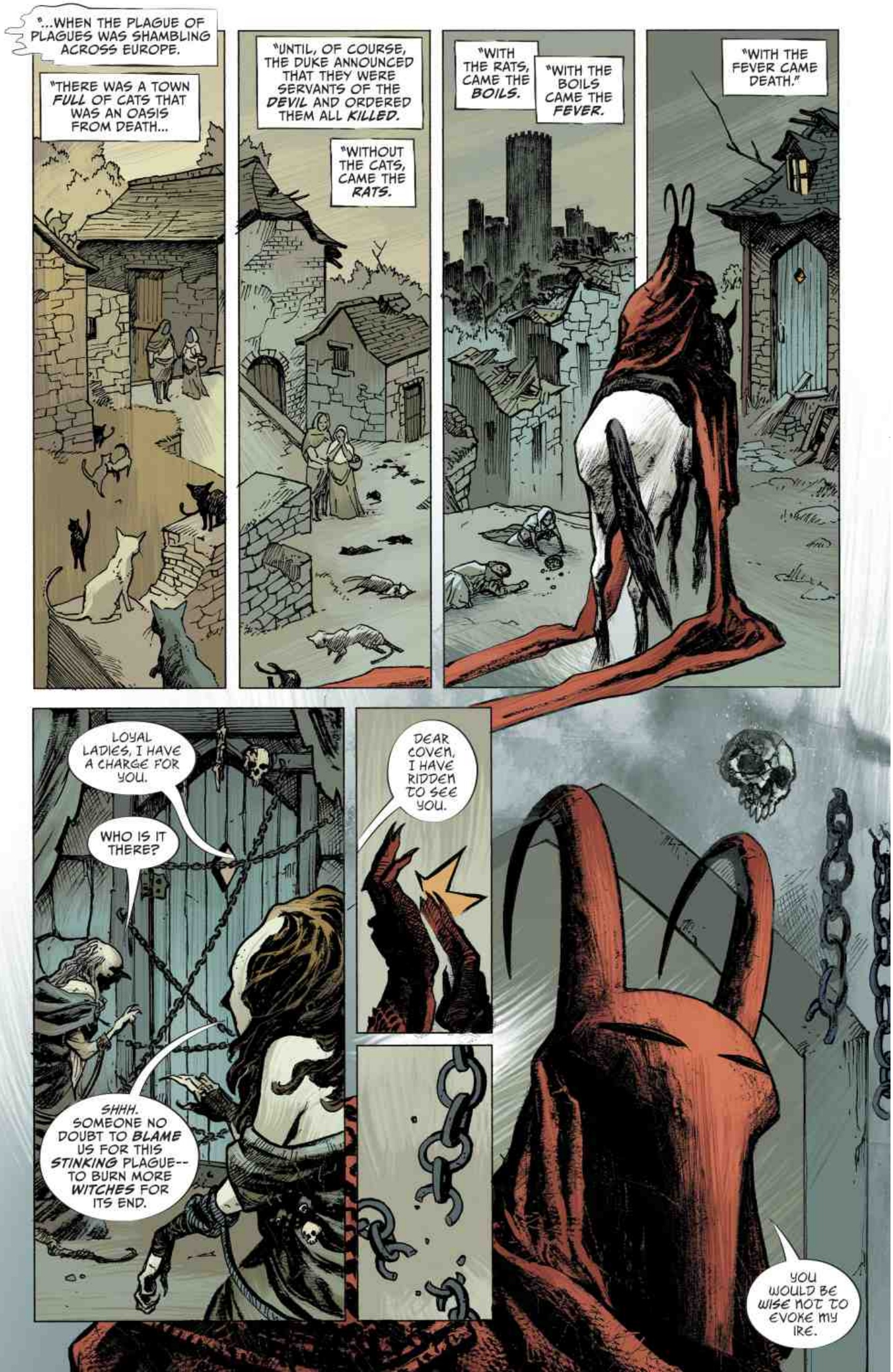

"...WONDER WHERE HE SPRANG FROM?"
GATELY HOUSE
I'M SORRY, ROBERT. THIS... WAS A BAD IDEA. I DON'T KNOW WHAT I'M DOING HERE.
PENNY MENTIONED YOU, IS ALL. ONE OF THE LAST THINGS... ONE OF THE LAST THINGS SHE SAID.
MY LORD. WHAT *DID* SHE SAY?
SOMETHING ABOUT...
LOOK, IT DOESN'T MATTER.
DID SHE TELL YOU?
WHAT?
CLEARLY NOT. QUITE RIGHT, NOT FOR YOU TO WORRY ABOUT-- ESPECIALLY NOT RIGHT NOW. AN OLD FAMILY MATTER IS ALL.
NOTHING TO DRAG UP AT A TIME LIKE THIS.
HAVE YOU GOT SOMEWHERE TO STAY? I'D SUGGEST YOU GET SOME REST AND THEN HEAD HOME, JOHN.

YOU LOOK ILL, IF YOU DON'T MIND ME SAYING. YOU NEED SOME STABILITY AROUND YOU.
YEAH... MAYBE. MAYBE THAT'S WHAT I'LL DO.
GRAAAH
That's one of our older residents. She does this on occasion.
I don't know why.
OH GOD...
Perhaps as we age and our senses rot away, we feel the need to use what we have left as much as we can.
MY... HEAD...
Yes. It's rather piercing.

Mr. Decker...
I'm sorry to hear about your *wife*. She seemed a *pleasant* woman.
WHAT...?
CRAP
WAIT, WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
YOU KNEW MY WIFE?
CRAAA
I'm *coming*.
I-IT WON'T STOP.
...OH GOD.
Now then...
What *has* set this off?

"'OLD FAMILY BUSINESS!'"
ROBERT'S WORDS ECHO AROUND JOHN'S STILL-TENDER SKULL.
AN ARIADNE THREAD THAT EVERY DETECTIVE'S INSTINCT IN HIM SCREAMS OUT TO PULL.
SO HOW HAS HE BECOME SO AFRAID?
WHAT DOES HE FEAR THAT HE'LL FIND AT ITS END?
JUST AS, HOW COULD AN OLD WOMAN'S SCREAM SEND HIM RUNNING-- TREMBLING?
SOMETHING ABOUT THIS PLACE IS ROTTING HIM. MAKING HIM SOMETHING HE'S NOT.
PERHAPS HE JUST NEEDS TO RECONNECT WITH HIS LIFE.
CALLS, MESSAGES... FRIENDS, COLLEAGUES, SUPERIORS...
HIS DOCTOR.
MOTEL
Voice Mail (4)
Cancel
Select
MR. DECKER?
NORMALLY I WOULDN'T DO THIS OVER THE PHONE, NEVER MIND ON A MESSAGE--BUT THIS IS MY FOURTH TIME CALLING, AND IT'S IMPERATIVE THAT YOU COME BACK IN.
THE C.A.T. SCAN HAS REVEALED A SHADOW ON YOUR BRAIN.
IT PROBABLY IS A TUMOR, BUT WE CAN'T BE SURE UNTIL WE RUN MORE TESTS.
PLEASE, CALL ME BACK, AS SOON AS YOU HEAR THIS. I IMAGINE YOU HAVE A LOT OF QUESTIONS--
Cancel
SOMETHING IS ROTTING HIM.

WHAT ARE THEY ALL DOING OUT THERE?
THEY'RE LOOKING AT SOMETHING THAT LUCIFER FOUND.
LOOKING. I REMEMBER LOOKING.
YES, I MISS IT, TOO.
HERE, KITTY CAT. PSS PSS.
YOU'LL LEND US AN EYE, WON'T YOU?
OH, HOLD STILL. I DO WISH YOU'D STOP...
AHA!
GOT IT!
SEE, THAT WASN'T SO BAD, WAS IT?
IT'S AS WE THOUGHT. EVERYTHING IS SO MUCH MORE...SYMBOLIC HERE.
SO, THIS IS WHAT CAT EYES SEE.
DO YOU REMEMBER THE CAT YOU HAD BEFORE?
HOW COULD I FORGET? THOUGH IT WAS SO LONG AGO...


"...WHEN THE PLAGUE OF PLAGUES WAS SHAMBLING ACROSS EUROPE.
"THERE WAS A TOWN *FULL* OF CATS THAT WAS AN OASIS FROM DEATH...
"UNTIL, OF COURSE, THE DUKE ANNOUNCED THAT THEY WERE SERVANTS OF THE *DEVIL* AND ORDERED THEM ALL *KILLED*.
"WITHOUT THE CATS, CAME THE *RATS*.
"WITH THE RATS, CAME THE *BOILS*.
"WITH THE BOILS CAME THE *FEVER*.
"WITH THE FEVER CAME DEATH."
LOYAL LADIES, I HAVE A CHARGE FOR YOU.
WHO IS IT THERE?
SHHH. SOMEONE NO DOUBT TO *BLAME* US FOR THIS *STINKING* PLAGUE-- TO BURN MORE *WITCHES* FOR ITS END.
DEAR COVEN, I HAVE RIDDEN TO SEE YOU.
YOU WOULD BE *WISE* NOT TO EVOKE MY IRE.

YOU'RE... YOU'RE HIM. LORD SATAN.
OH...OH FORGIVE US. WE DID NOT KNOW.
I HEAR THAT YOU DESIRE SOMETHING FROM ME.
NO. NOT ALL.
VERY WELL, BROKEN COVEN. A DEAL IS STRUCK...
"...YOU SHALL HAVE YOUR THIRD."
NO, WE COULDN'T...
WE SEEK OUR THIRD.
OH? YOU FEEL YOURSELVES INCOMPLETE.
MOTHER AND CRONE. THAT WON'T DO IT.
IF WE HAD A MAIDEN, TOO, WE WOULD REFLECT THE FURIES FULLY...WE COULD SEEK THEIR PROTECTION AND TAP THEIR MAGICS.
BUT THE DUKE HAS SHIFTED FROM BLAMING THE CATS FOR BEING OF YOUR COMPANY, TO BLAMING THE WOMEN.
ANY IN THESE LANDS WITH A WINK OF MAGIC IN THEM HAS BEEN BURNED.
REPENT!
I HAVE NOTHING TO REPENT, DUKE. I AM A LOYAL CHRISTIAN.

IN HER CONFESSION, FRU TEJE STATED YOU FED HALF THE VILLAGE WITH A SINGLE LEG OF MUTTON.
IT WAS A MOCKERY OF HIS WORKS. ONE PERFORMED BY THE DEVIL.
CONFESS, OR AT DAWN YOU ARE EXECUTED. IN HONESTY I HOPE YOU HANG.
I DO NOT KNOW HOW. THE MEAT JUST KEPT COMING. IT WAS A GIFT FROM GOD.
MY GUESTS AND I HAVE BEEN SO BORED, SEALED AWAY TO ESCAPE YOUR DEVIL'S PLAGUE.
TO HEAR A NECK SNAP WOULD BE FAR LIVELIER THAN ANOTHER DREARY MASQUERADE.
SURELY, A SORRY STATE OF AFFAIRS.
WHO'S THERE? ANOTHER OF THE DUKE'S GUESTS, TO MOCK MY ADORATION OF THE LORD?
NOTHING SO DREARY. I ONLY WISH FOR YOU TO RENOUNCE IT.

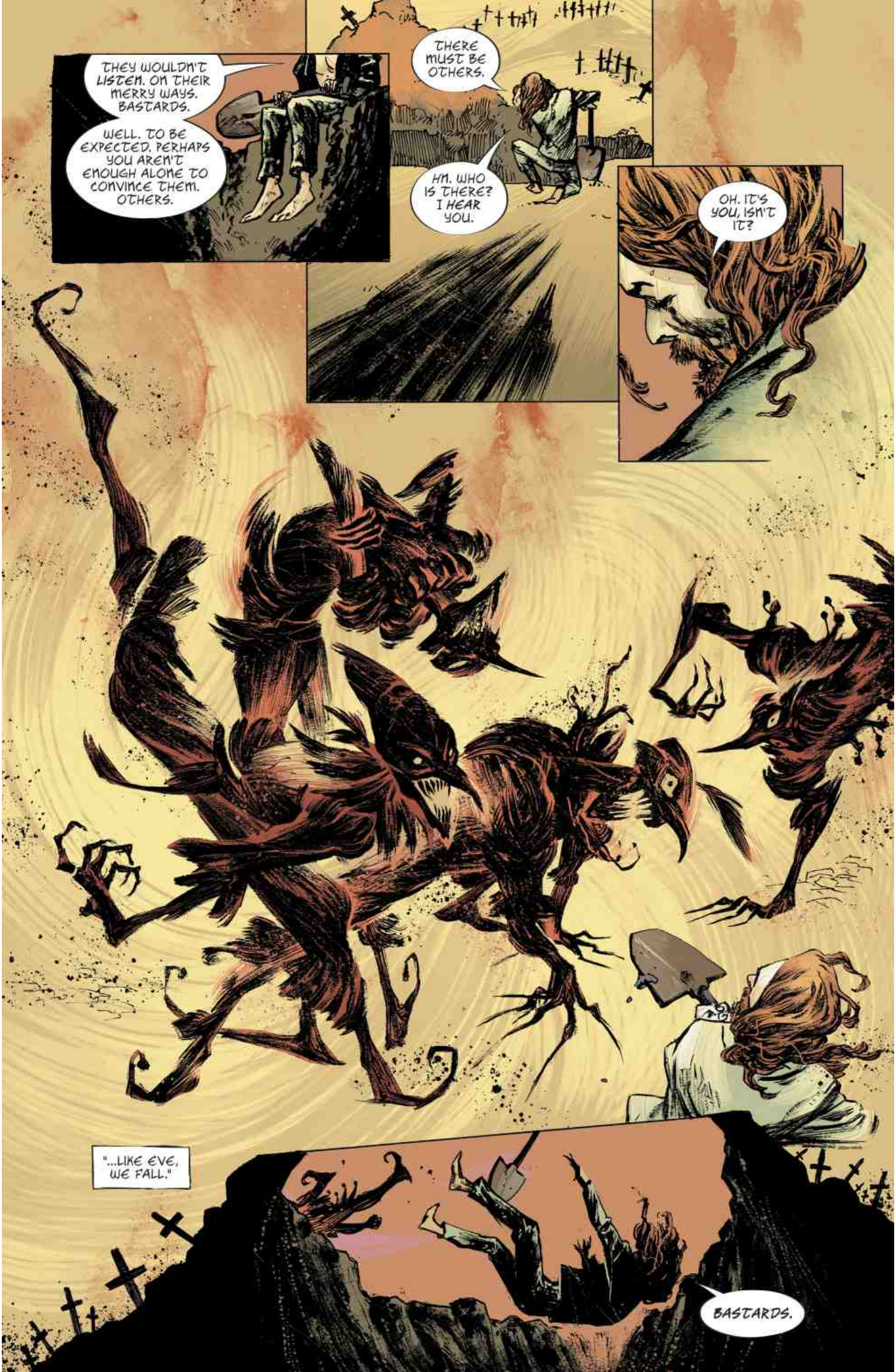
ARE YOU...
YES.
YOU HAVE POWER THAT COMES NOT FROM HIM, WHICH WOULD BE A SHAME TO SQUANDER ON A NOOSE. BUT I CANNOT HELP YOU IF YOU REMAIN IN HIS HOLD.
I WOULD NOT HAVE YOUR HELP. I HAVE HEARD WHAT MISERIES IT BRINGS. I LEAVE MY FAITH IN THE LORD.
VERY WELL.
IF YOU CHANGE YOUR MIND BEFORE DAWN...YOU NEED ONLY RENOUNCE HIM.
HE WILL NOT SAVE YOU. HE NEVER DOES.
"AND WITH THAT SHE WAS LEFT ALONE, TO LISTEN TO THE CLAMOR OF THE DUKE'S MASQUERADE, AND THINK ON HER OWN IMPENDING DEATH.
"AND SHE HAD NOTHING TO DO BUT PRAY.
"SO PRAY SHE DID. AND IN THE NIGHT...
"SHE WAS COMFORTED."
PRRR
WHAT?
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
IF THEY FIND YOU...THEY CAN'T FIND YOU, LITTLE ONE.
RRRWRR
NO, REALLY. YOU CAN'T STAY HERE.
"BUT ITS PURRS WERE SO SOOTHING, ITS BODY SO WARM..."

YOU SEE?!
THE WITCH EVEN HAS A FAMILIAR!
PERHAPS WE SHOULD HANG IT BY HER SIDE, WATCH THEIR LITTLE LEGS KICK ALL TOGETHER?
NO.
STOP, YOU'RE HURTING HER...
I AM INDEED. FOR I AM A GOOD SERVANT OF THE LORD.
PERHAPS WE COULD DROP IT FROM THE TOWER? SEE HOW MANY PIECES IT LANDS IN?
YOU HAVE TO STOP...
I RENOUNCE HIM.
I RENOUNCE HIM!

YOU'VE BEEN FEELING RATHER UNWELL, HAVEN'T YOU, DUKE PROSPERO?
I'VE NEVER LIKED YOUR FAMILY.
WH-WH--
N-NO... NO...
FOLLOW ME, GIRL.
"AND AS THEY LEFT, HE DANCED THROUGH THE MONASTERY-- THOUGH SHE HEARD NO MUSIC. ONLY COUGHING, AND RETCHING, AND SCREAMING RANG THROUGH THOSE CORRIDORS."

"SHE COULD NOT TELL WHETHER THE DEVIL HAD UNLEASHED HIS DEMONS INTO THIS PLACE, OR IF THE PLAGUE HAD SIMPLY PASSED THE DUKE'S IMPENETRABLE DOORS."
AND THUS, YOU ARE THREE.
AND NOW THE BOON I WILL HAVE OF YOU IN RETURN. I HAVE SOME ITEMS HERE THAT ARE DEAR TO ME. YOU WILL WATCH OVER THEM AND PROTECT THEM WITH YOUR LIVES.
THE BARGAIN IS SEALED, AND I EXPECT YOU TO KEEP YOUR END, REGARDLESS OF WHAT HAPPENS NEXT.
I WISH IT WERE NOT THE CASE, BUT THE FACT OF THE MATTER IS...THIS IS NOT MY PLAGUE. AND I HEAR HER BLACK WINGS OUTSIDE THIS DOOR.
I WOULD NOT DENY HER WHAT IS ALREADY HERS.
KRUF! KURRUF! GRUF!

AND SO, SHE PASSED WITH THE PLAGUE. AND WE WERE TWO AGAIN.
ETERNALLY TO SEARCH FOR OUR THIRD.
I KNEW THERE WOULD BE TEARS, TO HAVE MADE A COVENANT WITH SATAN.
I SEPARATED MYSELF FROM THE ALMIGHTY AT HIS WHIM, FOR HE IS *THE FIRST TEMPTER,* ***THE GREAT DECEIVER.***
YET LIKE EVE, WE ARE ***FOOL*** ENOUGH TO LISTEN TO HIM. AGAIN AND ***AGAIN...***

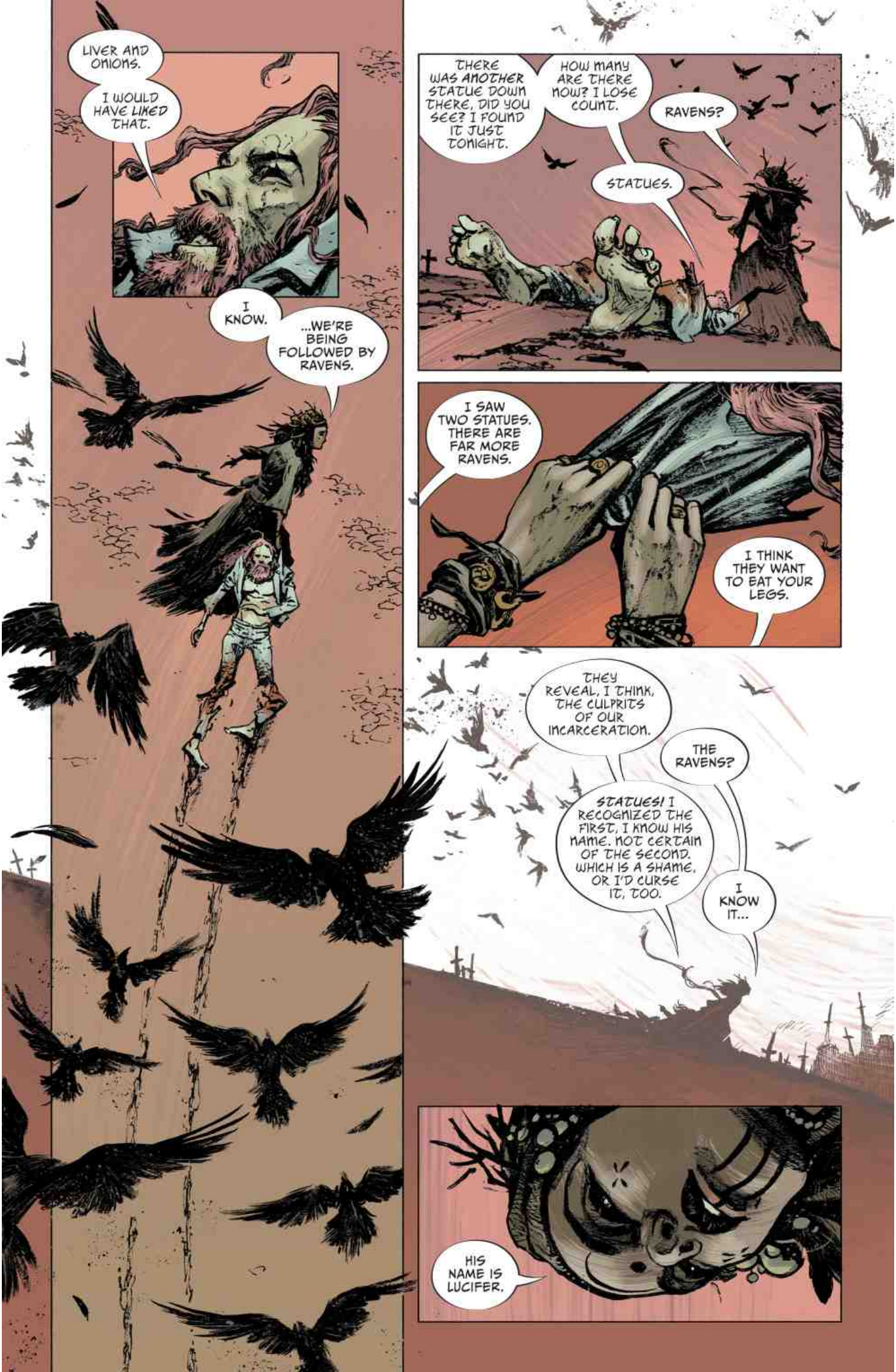

THEY WOULDN'T LISTEN. ON THEIR MERRY WAYS. BASTARDS.
WELL. TO BE EXPECTED. PERHAPS YOU AREN'T ENOUGH ALONE TO CONVINCE THEM. OTHERS.
THERE MUST BE OTHERS.
HM. WHO IS THERE? I HEAR YOU.
OH. IT'S YOU, ISN'T IT?
"...LIKE EVE, WE FALL."
BASTARDS.

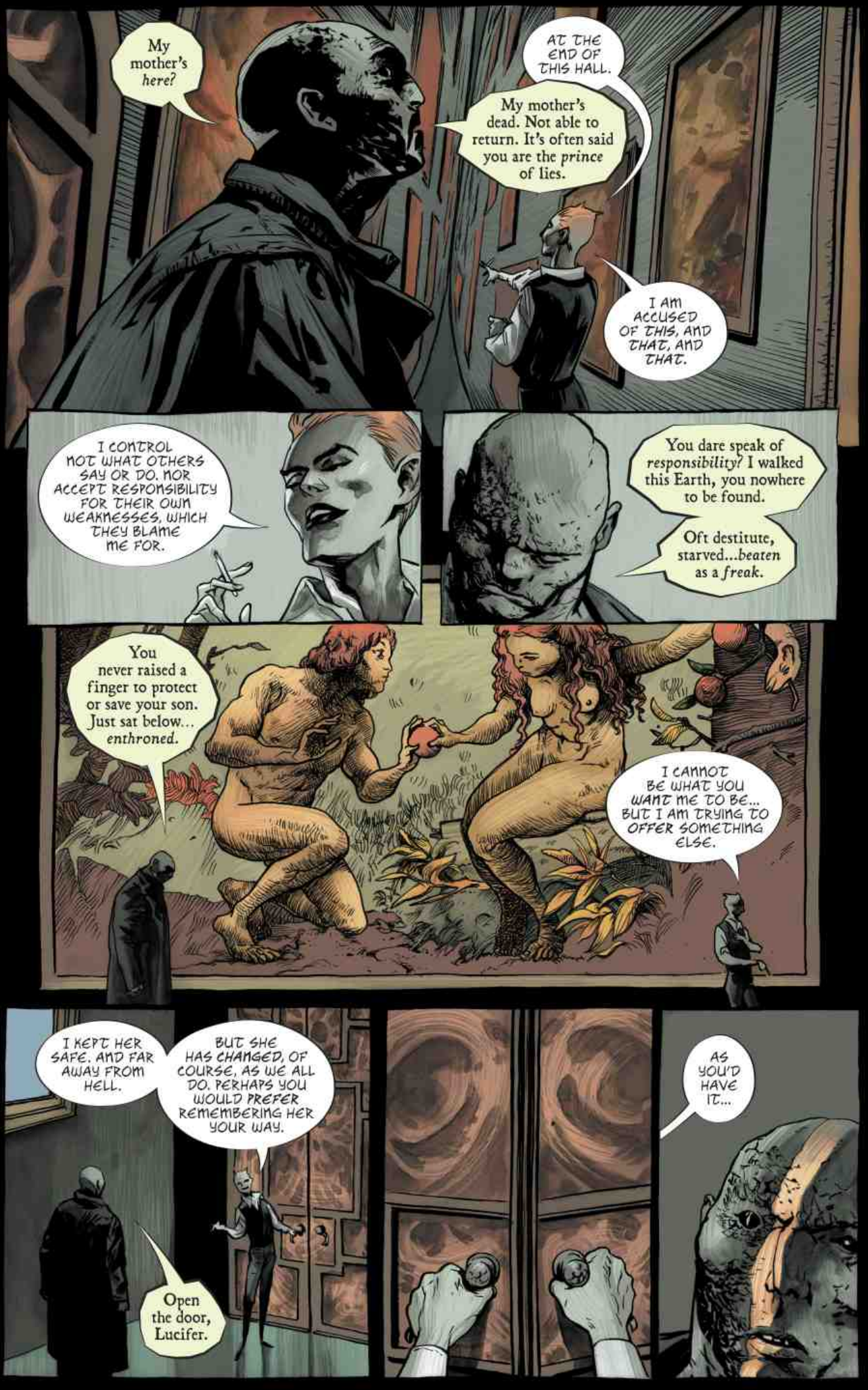
YOU KNOW... IT ALMOST MAKES SENSE. THE WHOLE FUCKING WORLD'S OFF ITS AXIS, BUT *THIS* MAKES SENSE.
THAT I'D INHERIT THIS *THING* OFF YOU.
IT'S WHAT I *DESERVE.*
YOU KNOW, PEN. A FEW DECADES WITH THE LAPD, YOU KNOW WHAT'S ALWAYS HAUNTED ME?
THOSE MOMENTS WHERE YOU WATCH A PERSON LEARN THAT SOMEONE THEY LOVE-- THEIR PARENT OR PARTNER OR WHOEVER-- HAS JUST BEEN ARRESTED FOR SOMETHING HORRIFIC.
YOU WATCH THIS *RIFT* OPEN UP BEHIND THEIR EYES... *"IS THIS PERSON I THOUGHT I KNEW ACTUALLY A STRANGER?"*
FACT IS, I DON'T THINK WE CAN EVER KNOW ANYONE FULLY. WE CAN *NEVER* SEE ALL THEIR ANGLES. JUST WHAT THEY SHOW US.
ALL I'M TRYING TO SAY IS...WHO CARES IF YOU HAD SOME CONNECTION TO THIS PLACE?
WHO CARES IF YOU AND YOUR COUSIN HUNG OUT WITH THE CREEPIEST PEOPLE ALIVE?
GATELY HOUSE
I HAD THE YOU THAT I HAD, AND I *LOVED* YOU.
YOU CAN KEEP YOUR SECRETS.

HEY, BUDDY. CAN WE HELP YOU WITH SOMETHING?
FELLAS, I WAS JUST LEAVING.
YOU SOME SORT OF *PERV* OR SOMETHING? FUCKING SICK, LURKING AROUND A PLACE LIKE THIS.
NO, I'M... A *FRIEND* OF ROBERT'S. HEY, DO YOU GUYS KNOW ROBERT EWELL?
ROBERT DOESN'T *HAVE* FRIENDS.
GET OUT OF HERE, *FRIEND OF ROBERT'S.*
YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE **MESSING** WITH.
HEY, GET OFF ME...
JOHN DECKER HAD READ ALL THE LITERATURE WHEN HIS WIFE'S DIAGNOSIS CAME IN.
"SYMPTOMS CAN RANGE FROM A SLOWING OF MENTAL ACTIVITY TO INTENSE OPTICAL HALLUCINATIONS WHEN LESIONS AFFECT THE OCCIPITAL LOBE."
DON'T...
BUT HE ISN'T PREPARED FOR THE **REALITY** OF IT.
HE SEES YOU!
HE SEES YOUR FACE!
THE **MAZIKEEN'S** GOING TO HAVE YOUR HEAD.

I FUCKING HATE THESE DREAMS.
Excuse me.
I'm sorry to bother you again.
Is anyone there?
only I seem to have *lost* Lucifer.
I can't find him anywhere.
Have you seen Lucifer?
I'm *worried* about him.

LUCIFER?
YOU NEVER CAME BACK FOR YOUR DINNER. I HAD TO THROW IT AWAY.
ARE YOU OUT HERE?
IT WAS LIVER AND ONIONS, LUCIFER.
I KNOW THIS. I KNOW THIS FACE. I KNOW THIS SECRET.
HOW DID IT COME TO BE BURIED ALL OVER AGAIN?
OH, LUCIFER.
DID YOU FALL IN?
HELLO.
I'M AFRAID I MAY HAVE OVEREXERTED MYSELF. I CAN'T SEEM TO GET UP.


LIVER AND ONIONS.
I WOULD HAVE LIKED THAT.
I KNOW.
...WE'RE BEING FOLLOWED BY RAVENS.
THERE WAS ANOTHER STATUE DOWN THERE, DID YOU SEE? I FOUND IT JUST TONIGHT.
HOW MANY ARE THERE NOW? I LOSE COUNT.
RAVENS?
STATUES.
I SAW TWO STATUES. THERE ARE FAR MORE RAVENS.
I THINK THEY WANT TO EAT YOUR LEGS.
THEY REVEAL, I THINK, THE CULPRITS OF OUR INCARCERATION.
THE RAVENS?
STATUES! I RECOGNIZED THE FIRST, I KNOW HIS NAME. NOT CERTAIN OF THE SECOND. WHICH IS A SHAME, OR I'D CURSE IT, TOO.
I KNOW IT...
HIS NAME IS LUCIFER.


My mother's *here?*
AT THE END OF THIS HALL.
My mother's dead. Not able to return. It's often said you are the *prince* of lies.
I AM ACCUSED OF THIS, AND THAT, AND THAT.
I CONTROL NOT WHAT OTHERS SAY OR DO. NOR ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY FOR THEIR OWN WEAKNESSES, WHICH THEY BLAME ME FOR.
You dare speak of *responsibility?* I walked this Earth, you nowhere to be found.
Oft destitute, starved...*beaten* as a *freak.*
You never raised a finger to protect or save your son. Just sat below... *enthroned.*
I CANNOT BE WHAT YOU WANT ME TO BE... BUT I AM TRYING TO OFFER SOMETHING ELSE.
I KEPT HER SAFE. AND FAR AWAY FROM HELL.
BUT SHE HAS CHANGED, OF COURSE, AS WE ALL DO. PERHAPS YOU WOULD PREFER REMEMBERING HER YOUR WAY.
Open the door, Lucifer.
AS YOU'D HAVE IT...

YOUR MOTHER... SYCORAX!
To Be Continued

Lucifer

"OF RED DEATH AND GINGER TOMCATS"

Written by DAN WATTERS

Illustrated by MAX FIUMARA & SEBASTIAN FIUMARA

Colors by DAVE MCCAIG

Letters by STEVE WANDS

Cover by TIFFANY TURRILL

EDITED BY AMEDEO TURTURRO & MOLLY MAHAN
ASSISTANT EDITOR MAGGIE HOWELL
EXECUTIVE EDITOR MARK DOYLE

LUCIFER based on characters created by Neil Gaiman, Sam Kieth, and Mike Dringenberg
Curated for THE SANDMAN UNIVERSE by Neil Gaiman

NEXT ISSUE:
THE ANNULMENT OF HEAVEN AND HELL

Hope arrives for Lucifer in the form of a mad poet, a tome of prophecy is found among the cookbooks, and things get even worse for John Decker.

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SON OF ULTRON